

There are many elements to SMART. It calls for fighting terrorism and stopping the spread of weapons of mass destruction through stronger multilateral relationships and improved intelligence. It demands that the United States live up to its nuclear non-proliferation commitments. It would redirect money we are spending on obsolete Cold War weapons toward homeland security and energy independence. But perhaps most important of all, it is a humanitarian program designed to improve living conditions in troubled regions of the world, to address the oppression and the deprivation that often give rise to terrorism in the very first place. That means supporting programs that promote sustainable development; human rights education; peaceful conflict resolution, educational opportunities, particularly for women and girls; and democracy building.

It is time for the United States to actually put its money where its mouth is on promoting democracy.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Tennessee (Mrs. BLACKBURN) is recognized for 5 minutes.

(Mrs. BLACKBURN addressed the House. Her remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

MEDICARE PART D

Mr. FITZPATRICK of Pennsylvania. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent to claim the time of the gentlewoman from Tennessee.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is there objection to the request of the gentleman from Pennsylvania?

There was no objection.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Pennsylvania (Mr. FITZPATRICK) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. FITZPATRICK of Pennsylvania. Mr. Speaker, as we stand here on this Chamber floor, thousands of seniors in my district and millions across our country are suffering through piles of Medicare drug plan offers; and in far too many cases, these seniors are faced with a difficult dilemma. They are suffering under the weight of too much information, with too little time in which to make a choice on what drug plan they will use under the Medicare prescription drug program.

□ 2015

Their decision is by no means simple. The drug plans our seniors choose will define their health care options for years to come. If they do not make a decision and wait until the May 15 deadline passes, they will face penalties and higher prices for the drugs that they need.

This week the Bucks County Courier Times, a daily paper in my district in Pennsylvania, mentioned the drug pro-

gram dilemma faced by one senior. Mary Ann Morgan was fighting through the details and complications of the new program. She said, "It's the same as if you're going to buy a stock. The fine print is hard to figure out."

Traditionally, Medicare's assurance has been that for the elderly and persons with disabilities that they will not be alone when confronted with the full burden of their health care costs. However, the Medicare prescription drug benefit has changed, and if the nearly 3,000 seniors I have met through 12 town halls can represent a sample of opinion, many seniors do not yet understand the prescription drug program and do not plan to sign up for coverage.

Despite the administration's long public information campaign, for many months polls have consistently indicated only 37 percent of those eligible for Medicare say they only partially understand the program. Sixty-one percent state they simply do not understand the program. Approximately one in four seniors, 24 percent, say they plan to join the program, while 54 percent say they do not plan to join, and 22 percent have no opinion.

The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services projected that 39.1 million Medicare beneficiaries would have creditable prescription drug coverage for 2006. Of this total, HHS projected that 29.3 million beneficiaries would be enrolled in part D plans, and nearly 10 million beneficiaries would have creditable drug coverage under qualified plans such as employer- or union-sponsored plans.

Mr. Speaker, the most recent enrollment figures released just last month indicate that only 19.7 million beneficiaries are enrolled in a Medicare part D prescription drug plan, a number that falls short of the hoped for estimate of 29.3 million. This rate of enrollment cannot be viewed as a success. Members of Congress must act to modify the original plan.

Mr. Speaker, I contend that there is a simple solution to this problem. Our seniors need more time, and Congress should provide it to them. Congress changed Medicare to give our seniors more choice in what has historically been a highly structured government program. Congress cannot in good conscience allow thousands of seniors to suffer penalties simply because they could not make an informed decision for their health care coverage and do so in time.

It is for these reasons that I introduced H.R. 4399, legislation that will extend the initial year's enrollment period an additional 6 months, until November 14, 2006. My legislation would also extend the enrollment period for an additional 4½ months for all subsequent years. And, finally, under my legislation penalties would be suspended for 2 years when seniors enroll late in the program.

I call on my colleagues to join as a cosponsor of H.R. 4399 to give Mary Ann Morgan and thousands of seniors

like her more time to make the best use of the choice that they have been given.

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. DENT). Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Ohio (Mr. BROWN) is recognized for 5 minutes.

(Mr. BROWN of Ohio addressed the House. His remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

ROGER TOUSSAINT AND PUBLIC EMPLOYEE PENSION BENEFITS

Mr. OWENS. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent to claim the Special Order time of the gentleman from Ohio (Mr. BROWN).

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is there objection to the request of the gentleman from New York?

There was no objection.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from New York (Mr. OWENS) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. OWENS. Mr. Speaker, Roger Toussaint, the president of Local 100 of the Transport Workers Union, is in jail in New York City tonight. Toussaint's crime is that he took a stand against New York Governor Pataki's sneak attack on public employee pension benefits. When the Governor's puppet appointees on the New York Metropolitan Transport Authority Board had already reached agreement on all other items during labor contract negotiations, the Governor ordered that a cut in pension benefits be added as a new demand. Although it was a cut proposed for the future employees, Roger Toussaint said, "No. I will not be a party to an agreement that sells out the unborn."

Roger Toussaint would not allow the Governor to set a precedent for all future State, city, county, and later on it would spill over to Federal employees, and they would have shoved in their face at the bargaining table this precedent of having cut public employee pension benefits. A domino effect would roll right across the entire Nation, and no public employee pension benefits would be safe. "Strike" was the rallying cry at that moment, and that rallying cry deserves the support of all working families across the Nation.

The private sector, the corporate butchers, have been carving up private employee pension benefit funds for some years now. Indeed, those of us who serve on the Education and Workforce Committee know that there is an impending pension bankruptcy crisis which may produce shock waves similar to the savings and loan scandal. Private pension benefits for workers we know are endangered, but we have all assumed repeatedly that pensions for public employees are safe, they are secure.

Roger Toussaint's confrontation with the Metropolitan Transit Authority dramatically exposes the fact that public employee pension benefits are also

in danger. Governors, mayors, and legislative bodies can carve up pension benefits even faster than the private sector if working families and their representatives do not remain vigilant and stand up against these attempts.

Ten days in jail they have ordered for Roger Toussaint. Two and a half million dollars they have fined the TW Local 100 organization. Dues check-off privileges have been taken away. The Governor and his MTA puppet board are trying to destroy the union that stood up and exposed the plot to swindle the workers out of their pension benefits. They want to destroy Roger Toussaint, the labor rebel. They want to smother the union rebellion.

Roger Toussaint should not remain an unsung hero. Now is the time for all working families to come to the aid of an heroic labor leader. Listen to the final words of Roger Toussaint at the door of the jail: "I stand here today because a judge has found me guilty of contempt of court. The truth of the matter is I have nothing but contempt for a system that gives employers free rein to abuse workers."

Now is the time for all labor organizations across the country to come to the aid of TW and Roger Toussaint in New York.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from North Carolina (Mr. MCHENRY) is recognized for 5 minutes.

(Mr. MCHENRY addressed the House. His remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

THE PEOPLE OF BELARUS

Mr. SHIMKUS. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent to claim the Special Order time of the gentleman from North Carolina (Mr. MCHENRY).

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is there objection to the request of the gentleman from Illinois?

There was no objection.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Illinois (Mr. SHIMKUS) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. SHIMKUS. Mr. Speaker, I was fortunate to be part of a foreign observer team to observe the failed Presidential elections in Belarus on March 19. Why was it a failure? One, because about 400 political activists were arrested prior to the election. There was prevailing that no one could account for and credit as being valid. I attended with a colleague of mine from Portugal, a member of Parliament, Suarez, and at the end of the evening after visiting 19 precincts, we were not allowed to see the ballots, nor were we allowed to observe the counting of the ballots. There was also no ability for the opposition candidates to campaign and get time on the state-sponsored TV station.

Why is this important, and why do I bring this up today? Well, after the

election there was a rally in Oktyabrskaya Square, and this is a photo from one, a protester with a banned flag. There were over 10,000 folks that rallied at this square, many of them staying in the evening through the next day over a period of weeks until the regime finally got fed up, which resulted in a crackdown of the protesters and imprisonment of, and I think there were about 685 on this list, 700 political activists who were jailed for protesting a failed election and rallying for the cause of freedom and democracy and the rule of law. In the square slogans that stated "Long Live Belarus"; "Freedom"; the announcement of one of the Presidential candidate's names, Milinkevich, those were the cries of people who want freedom, democracy, and the rule of law.

This was the regime's response. One of those jailed who is still in jail is opposition leader Alexander Kozulin. Kozulin was also a Presidential candidate. He remains in jail today and imprisoned unlawfully and will undoubtedly remain for the immediate future. On March 30 Dr. Kozulin was formally charged with two counts of hooliganism under part 2, article 339 of the Criminal Code. Now, hooliganism is taking part in a democratic rally and publicly speaking his concerns on freedom and democracy and the rule of law. Actions which disturbed the public peace, so the regime says, and active participation in them under article 342 is against the regime's laws. These crimes carry a maximum sentence of 6 years. Dr. Kozulin has yet to be assigned a trial date and will remain in prison until the regime succumbs to international pressure and assigns him a trial date to prove his innocence.

Tomorrow, April 26, as was stated by another of my colleagues tonight, is the anniversary of the Chernobyl disaster. Now, Chernobyl is in the Ukraine, but much of the fallout area is in the country of Belarus, and the prodemocratic organizations and movements and the political activists will be rallying again for freedom, democracy, and the rule of law.

The President/dictator of Belarus is an individual named Lukashenko, and since the election is now over and many of the international media has left the country, he may feel that it is within his power to continue to be ruthless and destroy and suppress the freedom movement in Belarus. My time tonight is to just talk to him, the folks in the country of Belarus and the people who yearn for freedom and democracy that the world will be watching the events of tomorrow's rally.

I hope that my colleagues here on the floor will stand with me in support of freedom of Belarus during this time and will work with the Belarusian people to bring free and fair elections to their country. Countries that are democratic historically have peaceful relationships with their neighbors who are also democratic. It is incumbent upon this House that is the bastion of

freedom, democracy, and the rule of law to be of aid to those people who yearn to be free. That is what this Special Order is about tonight.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Michigan (Mr. STUPAK) is recognized for 5 minutes.

(Mr. STUPAK addressed the House. His remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Minnesota (Mr. KENNEDY) is recognized for 5 minutes.

(Mr. KENNEDY of Minnesota addressed the House. His remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

LARRY NELSON

Mr. GINGREY. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent to claim the Special Order time of the gentleman from Minnesota (Mr. KENNEDY).

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is there objection to the request of the gentleman from Georgia?

There was no objection.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Georgia (Mr. GINGREY) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. GINGREY. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to congratulate a friend and a fellow Georgian Larry Nelson, who, after years of hard work and success, has been elected to the World Golf Hall of Fame this year.

Mr. Speaker, I want to call my colleagues' attention to this picture of Larry at my left. Look at that picture-perfect swing. I can only dream about that.

Larry Nelson, indeed, is an inspired golfer and an inspirational athlete. Throughout his successful 36-year career, Larry has risen to the top of his game, and he has remained there while racking up victory after victory. In the last 32 years on the PGA and the Champions tours, Larry has won 10 events, including 3 majors. His career is highlighted by his PGA championships in 1981, 1987, and his 1983 win at the United States Open. He is also a three-time member of the U.S. Ryder Cup team.

Larry's place among golf's greatest is well deserved. During the earlier part of his career in the 1980s, there were only three other golfers besides Larry who managed to win three major tournaments: Jack Nicklaus, Tom Watson, and Seve Ballesteros.

□ 2030

Larry Nelson undoubtedly belongs with these legends of golf.

We often hear of self-made men, and Larry is certainly one of them. Mr. Speaker, as a sergeant in the United States Army during the Vietnam conflict, golf was not even a blip on his